

Reviresco

by arian

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Summary: Sequel to Thoughts and Memories. Figure out what the title means, then you can guess what it's about. Maybe.

## 1. Default Chapter Title

><br> Reviresco.  
> By Arian.<br>  
><br> Author's note: OK, it's probably best if you read "Thoughts and  
Memories"  
> first because this is a sequel to it and if you haven't read  
T&M you won't<br> understand a lot of this. I will warn you now,  
there are spoilers. I'd also  
> better warn you that this is a very contrived plot line and just a  
lame<br> excuse for Arian to further her Laguna obsession. Um. Also  
some of the  
> characters are a bit out of character. And Squall is even more of a  
git<br> than usual.  
><br> Not a lot else I can say, except, please ignore the  
inconsistencies with  
> T&M and enjoy the story!<br>  
><br>  
> She sat beneath a tree, some distance from the other figure on the  
hill.<br> She knew that he would not want to see her, so she kept far  
enough away  
> that he'd never know she was there, but close enough to hear the  
story he<br> told.  
><br> She watched as he finished the tale and fell asleep. /Why am I  
here?/ She  
> thought. Why now? I don't want to be like this./  
><br> She had become conscious a short time ago. The first thing her  
eyes had  
> rested upon was a young man walking down the hillside, talking to a  
girl<br> at his side. She couldn't see their faces and they had not  
seen her. She  
> had thought nothing more of it until now. Until hearing that story.

Now<br> she knew who they were.

><br> /I want to go back to how I was. I want to rest. I'm so tired. Bone-weary./

> She smiled at the irony of it. But I don't have bones anymore. Not when I'm

> like this.

><br> While she had been thinking, a dark-haired young lady had approached the

> sleeping figure on the hillside and woken him.<br>

> Ellone? Is that really Ellone? She's so grown up! So old! But her face is

> still the same. Still the same round face she had before.

><br> She edged a little closer as they walked away and she caught Laguna's last

> words, on the edge of her hearing.<br>

> "Sleep well, Raine."<br>

> I was until recently./ She thought sadly. /I wish I knew what had woken me

> up. I wish this had never happened. Her eyes fell on the beautiful white

> flower Rinoa had made for her and Raine understood.<br>

> \*\*\*\*\*<br>

> Squall sat in his room, feebly trying to work while Rinoa talked to him.<br> It wasn't that he didn't like her company, but sometimes he wished she

> could appreciate the value of silence.<br>

> To his relief, Rinoa was interrupted by a knock on the door, and when he<br> opened it he found Quistis, Irvine, Selphie and Zell, all pale faced.

><br> /What's the matter with them? I don't think there was a party last night.

> If there was Rinoa would've made me go. Quistis never drinks anyway, so it<br> can't be a hangover./

><br> Squall invited them in and they lodged themselves around the room.

><br> /Something must be wrong. Selphie hasn't said a word yet, and Zell isn't

> shadow boxing. It must be really serious. Great, another problem, just what <br> I need. Why can't they all leave me alone?/

><br> After considerable nudging and whispered comments from the others, Quistis

> handed Squall a note and he noticed a slight tremor in her hand.<br>

> "This came for you this morning."<br>

> He opened the folded sheet of paper, expecting to find a declaration of<br> war or something worse, but when he read it, he laughed.

><br> "This is it?"

><br> "What does it say?" Rinoa peered over his shoulder and read the letter

> out loud.<br>

><br>

><br> Squall,

> Go back to Winhill. Bring Rinoa.<br> R.

><br>

> He stared at the cryptic message for a while. <br>

> "So why are you guys so nervy? And who's "R"?" he asked and Quistis looked<br> at him in surprise.

><br> "You don't know many people from Winhill, and there is one who's name

> begins with R who kind of springs to mind."<br>  
> "Raine?" Rinoa asked. "You think she wrote this? That's impossible."<br>  
> Raine's dead. We watched her die two weeks ago when we all stood round a  
> screen in Esthar. She has been dead for 17 years and I don't believe in<br> ghosts./><br> "You think this is ghost written and that's why all of you are out of  
> sorts."<br>  
> Selphie handed him a white flower.<br>  
> "This came with it. It's the same as the one's that were in Raine's bar<br> when we went to Winhill."  
><br> "Anyone could've sent this." Squall said flatly. "And how come you all  
read my mail before I do?"<br>  
> "I had to open it to see who it was for." Selphie shrugged. "And I just<br> kind of saw the rest of the writing. Then I told Irvine about it."  
><br> "Irvine told me." Zell put in.  
><br> "And then they all came knocking on my door." Quistis finished.  
><br> Squall rolled his eyes. /Great! One long game of Chinese whispers. What  
> did I do to deserve this? It must've been terrible.  
><br> He started to tell them his letters were private and shouldn't go around  
> the whole of Garden before they got to him, when he felt himself moving<br> towards the door.  
><br> "Rinoa, what are you doing?"  
><br> "We're going to Winhill."  
><br> "Because of this? It's just a joke or something. Ghosts do not exist."  
><br> "Then think of this as a way to prove that theory." She said, quickly  
> dragging him out the door before he had time to think of a reply.<br>  
> \*\*\*\*\*<br>  
> "Rinoa, what the hell are we really doing here? If you avoid it again,<br> I'll take you back to the Sorceress Memorial and let them vacuum-pack you."  
> Squall threatened as they walked away from the Ragnarok towards Winhill.<br>  
> "You wouldn't do that. If you remember, you/ were the one who objected to  
> it before." She replied tartly.<br>  
> "Rinoa!" he yelled in frustration. She sighed.<br>  
> "Look, I just... have a feeling about this, OK? Call it intuition, if it<br> makes you happy."  
><br> Squall rolled his eyes and walked on to the tiny village.  
><br> /Great, she  
> chooses today to be all sorceress-y and mysterious. Why me?  
><br> He started to head to the bar, but Rinoa took his arm and dragged him  
> away.<br>  
> "If she's here, you won't find her in there." She said, in answer to his<br> questioning look.  
><br> "How do /you/ know?"  
><br> "I have... an idea. A... theory about this, but I'm not sure,"

so I don't

> want to say anything. Just take my word for it, Raine will be on  
that hill,<br> where we went last time we visited."

><br> Squall was now completely confused, but followed Rinoa past the  
buildings

> and up to the hilltop.<br>

> A figure sat curled up next to the plaque that bore Squall's  
mother's<br> name. She lifted her head as they approached and climbed  
to her feet.

> Squall stopped in his tracks when he realised he could see the  
clouds in<br> the sky behind her. He blinked vaguely a few times,  
trying to make his eyes

> work properly, but the figure remained transparent.<br>

> He turned to Rinoa who was staring straight ahead and he caught a  
trace<br> of sadness, and worry, in her eyes.

><br> "Go and talk to her, Squall." She breathed quietly, still  
staring at the

> dark-haired woman in front of her. "Talk to the mother you've never  
met."<br> He nodded faintly, but found his feet refused to move. /I'm  
Squall

> Leonhart. I defeated Ultemecia, Adel and more monsters than I care  
to<br> count. I am not going to be petrified by a ghost. Especially  
not one that

> is my mother...

><br> With a supreme effort of will, he forced himself forwards until  
he stood in

> front of her.<br>

> It was undoubtedly Raine Loire that waited patiently before him.  
The same<br> dark hair and blue eyes he remembered from the  
Ellone-induced dreams, and

> from the incident in Esthar recently, when he had watched her die  
while<br> standing in another room with 17 years between them.

><br> /What can I say? What do I say to her? I never knew her. Never  
had the

> chance. Now I have that chance and I don't have a clue what to do.  
Do I<br> tell her I wish things could've been different? That's lame.  
She must know

> that already.

><br> While Squall was still trying to formulate something  
intelligent to say,

> Raine looked at him carefully, then spoke.<br>

> "You're confused, I'm sorry. You don't know what to say, do you?  
You can<br> relax a little about that. You can't say anything that  
would offend me. You

> must have questions you want to ask me. I don't mind." Raine's  
eyes<br> flickered away from Squall as Rinoa came forward to stand at  
his side.

><br> "Julia?" Raine whispered. "I know you aren't her but..."

><br> "You knew my mother?" Rinoa asked quickly.

><br> "She was your mother?" Raine gave a short laugh. "Yes, that  
explains the

> likeness. I knew of her. I... saw a picture of her once."<br>

> "You said it's OK to ask questions, Raine..." Mu -" Squall  
queried<br> awkwardly.

><br> "It's OK. You just call me Raine, like Elle does. I didn't call  
you up

> here to make you feel awkward." She said softly.<br>

> "That's what I wanted to ask. Why are we up here and why did you

send that<br> letter?" Squall frowned. "And /how/... you're..."

><br> "Can we talk about why in a minute? As for how I sent the letter..." Raine

> shrugged. "I got one of the villagers to post it."<br>

> "They know you're here?" <br>

> "No. They didn't remember. They didn't even know what they were doing." She<br> replied sadly.

><br> "Was it you we saw when we came to Winhill a while ago?" Rinoa put in, a

> strangely intense look on her face.<br>

> "No." Squall felt something, an understanding, pass between the two women<br> and he watched as Rinoa walked away a short distance and sat on the grass.

><br> "What's the matter with her?" he asked, looking with wide eyes at his

> mother. "I don't understand."<br>

> Raine reached out a hand, unable to help herself, but Squall drew back<br> before she could touch his face.

><br> "I'm sorry." She sighed. "I shouldn't have done that. But you just looked

> so much like him/. And I... ah, my son, I'm confused too."

><br> "Why didn't you call Laguna? He'd love to see you again. He'd do anything

> you asked."<br>

> Raine looked at her son carefully. <br>

> "He wouldn't." She said, after a while. "You think about it, and you'll<br> realise that he just couldn't see me again. Not like this." She beckoned to

> Squall and they walked over to Rinoa.<br>

> "You asked why, well, this is your answer. I... awoke?... a short time ago.<br> The first thing I saw was you two walking away. A few days later, Laguna

> and Elle turned up. Laguna recited what must have pretty much been your<br> life story, Squall, and then they left, without ever seeing me. I made sure

> of that. The main point is that I don't want to be like this. This isn't<br> for me. I'm no tragic figure to wander like this. Tragic is not what I want

> to be and it's not something I've ever been good at. I want to "rest in<br> peace" or whatever. Help me." She finished, smiling as she drew in a breath

> she didn't need. Yes, there was a lot about this existence that amused her.<br>

> "I don't have much else I can tell you, except that I can't leave this<br> hilltop." She sighed in frustration.

><br> "Why did you... wake up?" Squall asked.

><br> "I don't know... I have an idea now, though. Rinoa can explain it better

> than me." She cast a glance to the girl, still sat with her head in her<br> arms. After a moment, the mass of dark hair lifted and Squall saw that she

> had been crying.<br>

> "I'm so sorry. So very sorry. I didn't know... I shouldn't... Oh I'm<br> sorry."

><br> "Rinoa, what's wrong? Whatever you've done, we can fix it." He knelt

> beside her.<br>

> Rinoa's horrified eyes looked up at him. "The rose, Squall. The rose I<br> made. It woke Raine up. I don't know how exactly but

somehow everything I

> was thinking all got mixed up."<br>

> "It doesn't matter. It's just a flower, right? We can crush it or  
burn or<br> something, can't we?" He asked, knowing the answer was  
not going to be that

> simple.<br>

> "I made it eternal, remember?" She shook her head fiercely. "I  
shouldn't<br> have done anything! Sorcery is not to be messed around  
with!"

><br> "You were trying to help me. You meant well." He tried to  
console her,

> knowing how awful he was at that kind of thing. "Let's get back to  
the<br> Ragnarok. We'll decide what to do from there."

><br> Rinoa nodded and wiped her eyes. Raine, who had been watching  
them

> silently, spoke up. "I can't leave here."<br>

> "You can. I'm sure if we take the flower, then you can come, too.  
It must<br> be the flower you're..." Rinoa struggled for a word,  
"Connected to."

><br> Raine nodded acceptance, and Rinoa walked to the plaque and  
picked up the

> perfect rose she had created.<br>

> \*\*\*\*\*<br>

> "How did you know it should be white?" Raine asked after staring at  
the<br> flower, where it sat on the tabletop.

><br> "It just seemed... right. To tell the truth, I didn't think  
about it much

> while I made it. I just had a picture in my mind and I made it  
real." Rinoa<br> shook her head. "I don't know how it works, but Edea  
will be able to help  
us."<br>

> She looked out of the windows at the clouds racing past as they  
tore<br> through the sky. They were headed to the old orphanage, to  
see Edea. She

> lived with Cid in Garden now, but after a quick phone call  
("Matron... We've<br> got a bit of a problem..."), she had agreed to  
meet them elsewhere. Squall

> did not want to inflict the bustling atmosphere of Garden on Raine,  
or<br> perhaps he didn't want to inflict Raine's presence on Garden.  
He still

> wasn't comfortable with her.<br>

> "I don't understand a lot of things. Why did Squall grow up in  
an<br> orphanage? And Elle? Laguna left a lot out in the story he  
told me."

><br> Rinoa hesitated and opened her mouth to speak, but Raine shook  
her head

> and sighed.<br>

> "No. It doesn't matter anymore. I just say it so that you know  
how<br> confused I get, every so often. This is like standing in the  
middle of a

> play, having to make up your lines without knowing what the people  
before<br> you have said. But then, a lot of life is like that." She  
laughed. "Death

> too, it would seem. But no, I have no curiosity anymore. I don't  
need the<br> answers I once craved." She smiled impishly at Rinoa for  
a moment.

><br> "I saw a picture of Julia, once. Wanna hear about it?"

><br> "Sure." Rinoa shrugged, curious about a story that involved her  
own mother,

> however briefly, and intrigued by the way the small woman in front

of her  
 leapt from subject to subject.

><br> "You know some of the story, that Laguna managed to throw himself off a

> cliff and recovered in Winhill? Well, he was getting really edgy about<br> something that he'd had with him when we brought him in. Me, being the

> curious wretch that I am, despite everything he said, fished around while<br> he was out and I found a picture of Julia. You wouldn't believe how mad I

> got at myself for being jealous." She chuckled to herself. "I can't believe<br> I was so dumb!"

><br> Rinoa smiled. "What did Laguna say, when he found out?"

><br> "Oh, he never did. I was too stubborn to say a word about it. Always was

> too stubborn for my own good. But I did ask him about Julia. About why he<br> hadn't gone back to see her."

><br> "Tell me about it."

><br> "You really want to hear? I'm not boring you yet?"

><br> Rinoa shook her head. "No, I like talking /and/ listening but I only get to

> do the talking part around Squall. If I listened, well..."<br>

> "He isn't very talkative, is he? What was I talking about? Oh... I<br> remember. Asking Laguna about Julia. He was really mad at me after I did

> that. Well, not mad. I don't think he's ever been mad at anyone, but he was<br> definitely upset."

><br> "Why? Didn't he think you'd ask, sooner or later?"

><br> "No, it wasn't that. It was my timing. He'd just asked me to marry him."

><br> Raine chuckled again and Rinoa burst out laughing.

><br> "I could see Squall doing something similar. If I asked him something

> important, he'd probably ask for the card rules for the area, or if it was<br> me or Selphie that had Leviathan junctioned! Something work related anyway.

> What happened next?" Rinoa asked, returning to the story.<br>

> "Laguna, the poor love, didn't know what to do and tried to avoid<br> answering the question." She sighed. "It was a stupid question anyway. I

> didn't need an answer, not really. It never mattered. But stubborn, curious,<br> delusional little Raine wanted answers to everything under the sun, and she

> got her answer eventually." She closed her eyes in pain and Rinoa reached<br> hesitantly across the table.

><br> "Raine? Are you alright?"

><br> Raine's eye's snapped open before Rinoa's hand reached her own.

><br> "No. You can't. I can touch people... but not objects, and people cannot

> touch me."<br>

> "I don't want you to be upset." Rinoa held her hand out, offering it to<br> Raine, palm up.

><br> "No, Rinoa. If you knew what it felt like... Just believe me, it's enough

> to give you nightmares."<br>

> "How do you know all this?" The girl asked.<br>

> "It's innate. It's to do with what I am." She shook her head in<br> despair. "It's pulling me apart. My personality isn't even all here. Not

> all at once. It's as if everything that I am is a mist and I can

only<br> snatch at so many parts of me at a time. Never all of me at once."

><br> "Well, that explains the mood swings." Rinoa smiled. "Don't worry. We'll

> help you."<br>

> \*\*\*\*\*<br>

> Squall landed the Ragnarok and sat thinking for a moment. He was still<br> very unsure about his situation. Raine undoubtedly existed in some form - he

> didn't have a problem with that - but it seemed that she didn't want to. He<br> finally got to meet his mother and she didn't want to stay with him.

><br> /Maybe she hates me./ Squall thought, gloomily. /I wouldn't blame her if

> she did.

><br> He shook his head, quickly trying to banish that feeling of self-pity. He

> knew that she loved him, it just hurt that despite that she wouldn't stay.<br>

> She won't remain here for me, but perhaps there are others she will stay

> for. The line of thought was painful, but he allowed it to continue.

> Laguna and Sis. If she won't stay for them then nothing can make her stay.

> We have to get to Esthar -

><br> "Squall!" What /are/ you doing? Edea's waiting for us!" Rinoa yelled up

> from below.<br>

> "Whatever..." he muttered, stirring himself. I'm fed up with knowing

> Raine in snatches from other people's memories. I want to know her myself./

> I have to make sure that I get that chance.

><br>

## 2. Default Chapter Title

><br> Reviresco

> By Arian<br> Part2

><br>

><br>

> They walked to the derelict building that Squall and his friends had grown<br> up in and as he watched Raine, Squall realised that she wasn't exactly

> transparent, as he'd first thought. He could see everything behind her<br> quite clearly but if he concentrated, she grew a little more substantial.

> It was as if she was flickering, faster than he could see, and somehow both<br> the image of her and the image of what he would normally see registered in

> his mind, superimposing on each other.<br>

> Edea stood, waiting, in the ruins of her orphanage. She smiled serenely<br> as they approached, but no surprise registered on her features.

><br> /Nothing has ever been able to startle Matron./ Squall reflected.

><br> "Matron, this is Raine, my mother." He didn't give any further

explanation

> of Raine's identity. It wasn't necessary. His life story had circulated  
Garden and, to his disgust, he found that most of the students knew more

> about him than he himself knew.<br>

> Edea simply nodded and turned her eyes to Raine.<br>

> "You understand what has happened? And you want us to try to destroy the<br> flower? I will do what I can to help, but I can't guarantee that this will

> work. It may be that the flower is truly eternal and nothing we do will<br> make a difference, or we may succeed and there is no change to your state.

> Do you still want us to try?"<br>

> "Yes. Whatever happens is better than this." Raine answered without<br> hesitation. "Thank you, for looking after Squall and Ellone and for all

> you did for them."<br>

> "You know that is not necessary." Edea chided gently.<br>

> Raine nodded. "It seems wrong not to say it, though."<br>

> "Matron." Squall interrupted, anxious to put his plan into motion. "I<br> think I have an idea, about how to help Raine. Surely Esthar would have

> the technology to help."<br>

> Rinoa stared at him and a little of the colour drained from her face.<br>

> "What are you playing at?" She muttered under her breath.<br>

> "I'm not playing/ at anything. Esthar really is the best place to go."

> Squall wondered just how Rinoa always managed to see right through him.<br>

> "Perhaps, Squall." Edea thought for a moment. "But there are some things<br> we need to know first. Rinoa, I really need to know what was running

> through your mind when you cast the spell. Our best hope is that you missed<br> something and we can use that flaw to our advantage."

><br> Rinoa frowned slightly. "I was just thinking about Squall and Raine."

><br> "Did you make a mental list? Of things that you wanted to protect the

> flower from?"<br>

> "No. I don't remember doing that."<br>

> "Do we have to try everything/, then?" Raine asked in dismay.

><br> "Only the eight elements, and sheer physical force. If they don't work it

> starts to get complicated." Edea smiled ruefully. "We can't do this here<br> though. It will take time and this place is in ruins. We'll also have to be

> careful about where we go and who we involve in this. We don't want to<br> cause trouble by parading a genuine ghost - sorry Raine - across a couple

> of continents. I think the best place we can go is Esthar."<br>

> Squall cheered in the silence of his mind. Thank you, Matron!

That's

> exactly what I wanted!

><br> "I really don't think that's such a good idea..." Rinoa muttered, looking

> warily at Raine.<br>

> "Why?" Raine asked, confused.<br>

> "Laguna and Ellone are there."<br>> "Oh." Raine stood silently for a while, then she looked up. "Well, they<br> don't /have/ to see me, if they don't want to. They don't even have to  
> know."<br>> Dammit! She's ruining my plan! / "Esthar, then?" he said, out loud.

><br> Edea nodded. "It's best. Dr. Odine is there if we need any assistance."

><br> Squall ran through his plan silently, as the four of them walked the short distance to the Ragnarok. She'll be in Esthar, that's the main thing. I'll work out the rest once we get there. Sis and Laguna won't let her go, and<br> once she sees them, she won't want to leave./><br> \*\*\*\*\*

><br> "We'll stay with Laguna." Squall said as they sat on board the Ragnarok

> some time later. He ignored Rinoa's glare. "That palace or whatever is big<br> enough."

><br> "Staying there would give us good access to Dr. Odine." Edea approved.

><br> /Not to mention good access to Sis and Laguna./ Squall thought.

><br> "Palace?" Raine asked, frowning.

><br> "Laguna's the president of Esthar now." Rinoa stopped glaring at Squall long enough to answer.<br>

> For a moment, Squall thought his mother was going to burst out laughing,<br> but her blue eyes widened briefly and she settled for a look of amused wonder instead.<br>

> "...Unexpected." She said at last.<br>

> "A bloody miracle might be a more accurate way of putting it." Squall<br> muttered.

><br> "Why is it so surprising?"

><br> He stared at Raine, not quite believing the question, thinking carefully of an answer that wouldn't hurt her.<br>

> "Well, he's not exactly a genius, for a start."<br>

> "Does it take a genius to run a country?"<br>

> Obviously not./ Squall snickered in the depths of his mind, but Raine continued, oblivious to his comment.<br>

> "Clever men have never done Galbadia any good, I know that. I think he'll<br> do well." Her eyes shone as she spoke. "He has... I don't know. There isn't a word for it. A sparkle? Something like that. An indefinable<br> quality that draws people to him. You have it too, Squall. You might push people away, but no matter what you do, they stand by you."<br>

> "Garden looks up to you." Rinoa agreed.<br>

> You think I don't know that? That's why I work so hard. To try and make sure I don't fail all these responsibilities people keep piling on me.

><br> "Whatever." He answered, smiling to take the indifference out of the expression.<br>

> \*\*\*\*\*<br>

> Squall waited impatiently in a small room in the lower levels of the  
the<br> Presidential Palace. There had been no question of entry being denied and

> Rinoa had used sorcery to whisk Raine inside without being noticed.<br>

> "Finally!" He breathed as Kiros and Ward entered the room.<br>

> "Hello, Squall. What - " Kiros stopped suddenly and the colour drained<br> from his face as Ward tapped his shoulder and pointed to the far corner of the room.<br>

> "Raine?" The strangled whisper escaped from Kiros and he crossed the<br> short distance towards her. "What...?" he shook his head, lost for words.

> "Explain. Please?"<br>

> Edea told the story while Ward and Kiros continued to stare at Raine, eyes<br> wide.

><br> "I don't want Laguna to know. I don't want to hurt him." Raine added.

><br> "We can arrange for you to have this floor to yourselves for a while. As long as you all stay here, you won't run into anyone. Odine is around<br> somewhere, if you need to speak with him." Kiros looked to Ward for confirmation. "We won't tell Laguna. Not if you don't want us to."<br>

> "Thank you."<br>

> Squall watched as they walked out, and then turned to Edea.<br>

> "Matron, what do we do now?"<br>

> "What we came here to do. We have to try to find a way to unmake this<br> rose."

><br> "I can't stay here. I can't... I'm going for a walk. I'm sorry." He glanced quickly over to Raine and walked to the door.<br>

> I can't sit in there, watching them try to send her away. I don't want her to go! I have to get her to change her mind.

><br> He headed to the top of the building, despite what had been said about staying on the lower level, and opened the door to the presidential office.<br>

> Laguna was lounging in his chair, legs stretched out on the desk.<br>

> "Hi, Squall." He grinned at his son. <br>

> Does he ever actually /do/ anything? Every time I walk in here, he's just passing the time. Squall wondered, idly.

><br> "I need you to help me with something."

><br> "Sure." Laguna paused. "Why so serious?"

><br> Squall hesitated for a moment. /Is this right? Should I do this? I don't want to lose my mother again! That thought screamed in his mind, overriding any doubts.<br>

> "I want you to go and talk to Raine."<br>

> "What are you talking about?" Squall heard the faint edge of panic in<br> Laguna's voice.

><br> "She's here. Downstairs. She's... I don't know, a ghost, or something."

> Squall the Tactful, that's what I should be called. I hate saying stuff

> like this, I always get it wrong! And this is a wonderful example  
of me<br> getting it wrong./><br> "Oh no... no, she can't be." Laguna paced back and forth,  
shaking his head in disbelief. "No. I don't believe you. It's some kind of bad  
joke,<br> isn't it?"><br> "No. I wouldn't joke about something like this. Besides, I'm  
the workaholic SeeD, remember? We don't joke. Especially not like  
this."<br> "The dead are at peace. They don't... They can't walk." He muttered  
to<br> himself. "I don't like what that... No."><br> Squall finally lost his temper.><br> "Well, you don't have to believe me! Come and see for yourself!  
That's why I came up here. I want you to talk to Raine. She doesn't want  
to be the<br> way she is. She wants us to send her back to wherever  
she was. You can't let her leave again!"<br> "She's dead. And even if she were here, I wouldn't see her. I  
wouldn't<br> ever ask her to stay, either."><br> "For once in your life, stop behaving like a child! Don't let  
her go."> Please." Squall was completely confused. Why was he so willing to  
let her<br> slip back into nothing? What was wrong with him?><br> "No. I can't do that, Squall. Grow up and think about it from  
someone's point of view other than your own." Laguna turned his back, and  
Squall<br> stormed out, making his way back to the lower levels of  
the building.><br> \*\*\*\*\*><br> Rinoa turned from the flower as the door was flung open,  
thinking that Squall had returned. The figure that entered was familiar, but it  
wasn't<br> Squall who stood there. It was Ellone.><br> "I got the story out of Kiros. Is it really true?" She asked  
quickly.><br> "Yes." Raine stepped forwards and elation shone in Ellone's  
eyes.><br> "I hoped so much. I didn't dare believe it."><br> "Don't get your hopes up, Elle. I'm not staying." Raine warned  
softly.><br> "I know. But you're here now, and there's so much I want to  
tell you!"><br> Raine turned to back Rinoa. "Do you mind if we take a break? So  
I can talk to Elle for a while?"<br> "No problem. None of the GF's worked anyway, so I need to talk to  
Edea."<br> Rinoa shrugged and left them to talk.><br> \*\*\*\*\*><br> Squall walked quickly back to the room, lost in his own  
thoughts. Just as he was about to open the door, Ellone walked out.<br> "Sis! Great! I wanted to speak to you. You've already seen  
Raine?"<br> "Yes!" Ellone breathed. "I'll do anything I can to help."<br> Squall got a sudden foreboding that things weren't going his way.  
"What<br> are you talking about?"><br> "If you need me to do anything to help Raine, you only need to  
ask." She

> explained. "You could say that I owe her." <br>  
> Squall groaned. "Sis!" <br>  
> "What?" she asked, unaware of what he'd wanted her to say. <br>  
> Squall was about to say something else when an idea struck him. No, wait,  
> I can use this.  
><br> "I've had this idea about how to help Raine." He lied. "I  
really need  
> Laguna to come and speak to her first, though. The problem is that  
he<br> doesn't want to."  
><br> "He /what/?"  
><br> "Could you help?" Squall asked, wide eyes feigning innocence.  
><br> "Don't worry, Squall. I'll get him down here." Elle promised,  
trusting  
> Squall's judgement that Laguna's presence was a necessity. <br>  
> "No need to tell him about the idea, or anything. Just get him to  
talk to<br> her." /That should be enough. It has to be./  
><br> \*\*\*\*\*  
><br> Raine sat alone, watching her white flower with a pensive  
expression on  
> her face. They would have to find something that worked soon, she  
knew<br> that Squall was up to something. She could read it in his  
face. He didn't  
> want her to go, Raine knew that, but she did not want to stay. She  
couldn't.<br> It was so difficult for her to concentrate on what they  
were saying, on  
> everything that went on around her. She was so tired and only  
wanted<br> oblivion, but it seemed that was too much to ask.  
><br> She pitied Squall. He couldn't change her mind, no matter what  
he did,  
> but he had inherited her stubbornness and would keep trying. <br>  
> He's going to hurt people if he keeps doing this./ She realised  
suddenly.  
> I won't stop him though. Maybe I want him to change my mind. Maybe  
I want  
> him to make leaving so difficult that I have to stay. Think of  
that! Being<br> able to stay with him, Elle and Laguna! Wouldn't it  
be wonderful!/  
><br> /But the pain and hurt of missing all those years is still  
there and will  
> always be there. I wish it didn't matter, but it does. Just being  
here<br> hurts more than I can stand./  
><br> /I want to see Laguna! You can't./ She told herself angrily.  
/You can't  
> hurt him. You cannot do that. Besides, you know that if he asked  
you to<br> stay, you would. Despite everything you would stay with  
them if he asked  
> you to... I don't think he'd do that, but is that a risk I can  
afford to<br> take?/  
><br> "I want to go home." She whispered quietly, puzzling at the  
words as she  
> said them. <br>  
> Where is home? I don't know anymore./  
><br> She quickly switched to another subject. /Squall and Ellone -  
How much  
> they've grown! It was hard for her to adjust her images of them  
from a  
> baby and a hyperactive six year old, to what they had become. It

wasn't so<br> bad with Elle, because she looked much the same, but Squall she had only  
> seen once, as a newborn baby, and the only similarity left was his grey<br> eyes.  
><br> Not for the first time, she sat and wondered how she could bring herself  
> to leave them now, when the choice was her own.<br>  
> They have lives to live, choices to make and future to live for. If I  
> stay, I'll end up pulling them down into death with me. I would never do<br> that deliberately but it would happen. I know it would.  
There are too many  
> reasons why I can't stay!  
><br> Raine returned her thoughts to her son and amused herself for a while by  
> dissecting his character traits. There were many that were entirely his<br> own, but some she recognized.  
><br> /Stubbornness - that's from me, independence - I was never really that  
> independent. I liked to think I was, but I relied on others a little more<br> than they knew. Maybe he's like that, too. He certainly gets that "sparkle"  
> from Laguna. And the structure of their faces is so similar!  
  
><br> /Except Laguna smiles.../  
><br> She laughed quietly to herself and waited for Squall and Rinoa to return.  
><br> \*\*\*\*\*  
><br> Ellone walked hurriedly through the corridors, clutching at the  
> ever-present green stole that hung from her arms in an attempt to stop it<br> from falling to the floor.  
><br> /Squall must have misunderstood. Of course Uncle Laguna will want to talk  
> to Raine. Or maybe it was Laguna who didn't understand Squall. Squall has<br> never been terribly good at expressing himself. Once Laguna understands,  
> he'll be as happy as I am!  
><br> Ellone had only recently been able to forgive herself for the part she  
> had played in Raine's death and although she knew Raine would never have<br> blamed her for causing Laguna to leave Winhill, for years she had blamed  
> herself. Now, to be able to talk to Raine and say she was sorry, just to<br> be able to see her, even if it was only for a short time, was more than  
> Ellone had hoped for. Raine had to leave, Ellone could accept that, even<br> if she couldn't understand it.  
><br> She pushed open the door to the office and stepped over to Laguna where  
> he stood gazing out of the window. He did that a lot, she noticed. Almost<br> as if he couldn't believe what he saw, despite having seen it nearly  
> everyday for years. It was a fantastical city, she had to admit, almost<br> beyond belief.  
><br> "Hey, Elle." He said as he noticed her approach.  
><br> Ellone's mind suddenly reverted to how it had been the last time her  
> family had been together and she ran the rest of the distance.<br>

> "Raine's here!" she gasped, excited. She tugged gently at Laguna's hand,<br> as if she were once again the tiny, bubbly girl he had met in Winhill.

><br> He looked bemusedly at Elle for a moment, wondering at her sudden change

> in demeanour. Then her words sank in.<br>

> "You've been talking to Squall?"<br>

> Ellone nodded and tugged at his hand again. "Come and see her!"<br>

> "No, Elle. I'm sorry, but I can't do that." He shook his head.<br>

> Ellone's mood abruptly faded and for a brief moment she marvelled at a<br> side of her that she thought had died with Raine.

><br> "Why?" she asked, dropping his hand in confusion. "You love her."

><br> "Yeah. I do." He said, a little wistfully. "But I can't see her like that.

> I can't handle it. All this time it's been a small comfort that... Ah I<br> don't know." Laguna shrugged. "That wherever she was, she was happy. She

> was at peace, or whatever." He smiled sadly for a moment. "If she wasn't,<br> she'd have made sure I knew about it, wouldn't she?"

><br> "Now it turns out that she's here. What does that mean, Elle? Wasn't she

> happy where she was? It hurts too much for me to think about it."<br>

> "You can't mean that. You have to see her! She'll be gone soon and you<br> won't get another chance!" Elle burst out, suddenly angry at him.

><br> "I've fixed all I needed to fix." He said quietly. "I don't need another

> chance."<br>

> "What about her? She wants to see you!"<br>

> "Did she say that?" Laguna looked up quickly.<br>

> "No, but of course she does. She doesn't have to say it, I can tell."<br> Ellone glared at him, daring him to deny it.

><br> "If... if Raine asks for me... then I'll see her."

><br> "But she won't do that!" Elle shouted in exasperation.

><br> "Look, Elle, whatever I do, it doesn't make any difference. She's still

> dead." The word caught in his throat and he turned away.<br>

> Ellone stared at him in disbelief. "So that's it? Just for an instant my<br> family can be together again and you've decided to spoil it! Do you know

> what that means to me and to Squall, after growing up in an orphanage? Do<br> you have any idea what it was like?"

><br> "We wouldn't be together because Raine isn't alive. Maybe she's here, but

> it's not the same as being together."<br>

> "Come and speak to her!" Ellone insisted desperately, in one last attempt<br> to sway Laguna's mind.

> "Dammit, Elle, I can't!/" he yelled back at her and instantly regretted it

> as the girl's round face scrunched up and she ran from the room.<br>

> \*\*\*\*\*<br>

> Squall strolled into the room with a slightly smug look on his face,<br> convinced Ellone would succeed where he had failed.

><br> "You look pleased with yourself." Raine smiled, looking up as

he entered.

> Squall nodded and was about to reply when Ellone came flying through the doors, tears running down her face.

><br> "I tried, Squall! But it's no good, he won't listen!"

><br> Squall's smug look dissolved into consternation and he swore softly to

> himself. So much for his plan.<br>

> Raine's horrified eyes settled on her son, realising a little of what he<br> had meant to happen. As Squall looked back at her, his eyes caught a glint

> of white.<br>

> "OK, Sis. It doesn't matter." He said calmly. "Why don't you go and dry<br> your eyes."

><br> Ellone nodded and walked out, leaving Squall and Raine alone.

><br> "How close to the flower do you have to stay?" he asked casually.

><br> Realization hit Raine instantly and she watched him pick the rose up.

><br> "Don't do this, Squall. I know you don't understand a lot of what's going

> on here, but for his sake and mine, don't do this."<br>

> "I have to." He said simply and took the flower through the door.<br>

> Raine stood for a moment, hoping that his crazy idea wouldn't work, then<br> she felt a force hit her back and she was pulled after him.

><br> She walked behind Squall, feeling that walking was a little less

> demeaning than being dragged.<br>

> "You can't do this, Squall."<br>

> "Don't you know the first thing teenagers do when you tell them they<br> can't?" he answered blandly.

><br>

### 3. Default Chapter Title

><br> Reviresco.

> By Arian.<br>

> Part 3<br>

> <br>

><br> Laguna sat on his desk with his feet on his chair and rested his head in

> his hands. It had been a long, trying day.<br>

> There was a time I would've welcomed this./ He reminded himself. /I

> would've been grateful for this once.

><br> He wished Squall and Elle would understand, but he knew that the only way

> that would happen was if they experienced this themselves. Better that they<br> never know.

><br> Laguna sighed heavily and smiled. This was all completely beyond him.

> Every time he started to try and make some sense of it, he ended up<br> twisting his mind into knots which he'd then have to spend an hour

> unravelling.<br>

> Still feeling troubled about shouting at Ellone earlier, he decided

to go  
and look for her, to try and set things right again. He slid down off the

> desk as the door opened behind him and the voice that rang out made him  
freeze where he was.

><br> "Don't turn round!" Raine cried quickly, as soon as Squall ushered her

> through the doorway.<br>

> Laguna's fingers sought the edge of the desk and his knuckles went white  
in an effort to stop his hands from trembling.

><br> Squall glared at his mother for a moment, before moving to stand in front

> of Laguna. Chagrin showed on his face when Raine did not move with him.<br>

> "You can drag me from room to room, Squall, but I do have some/  
freedom of

> movement." She told him.<br>

> "You really/ hate us, don't you?" Laguna asked suddenly, and Squall looked

> up in shock.<br>

> "Hate you? No!"<br>

> "Then why do this?"<br>

> "He doesn't want me to leave, Laguna." Raine answered, sadly.<br>

> "I'm trying to put things right!" Squall cried out earnestly.  
"Speak to  
her, dammit!"

><br> "Don't turn around." Raine warned again. "Well, you can... if you want. I

> don't mind... it'd be nice if... oh, I don't know, whatever." She rambled,<br> unsure how to even begin to tell him what she thought, or even if she

> should. <br>

> "I'm sorry, I just can't. I wish..." his voice trailed off. "Were you  
happy?" he asked suddenly and Raine smiled.

><br> "Happy? Not really. There is no happy where I was. But I wasn't unhappy,

> either."<br>

> Laguna nodded, satisfied with the answer. Squall just stood and stared at<br> the two of them. This wasn't what he had expected. He had expected tears

> and smiles and then Raine would stay. He didn't understand their silence.<br>

> Laguna bowed his head, unwilling to look into his son's eyes, so Squall<br> walked back to Raine.

><br> "Why?" He asked quietly. "You must have things to say to each other. I

> don't believe that you haven't. Why don't you say them?"<br>

> "Are you hoping that if we talk enough, I'll stay?" Raine asked bluntly.<br> "That won't happen."

><br> "I just wish you'd talk! Properly! Maybe this won't make you stay, but...

> I don't know..." Squall shook his head angrily.<br>

> Raine took pity on him. "We don't talk, because it hurts. Every word<br> hurts. Every sentence feels like its lame and superfluous, and maybe most

> of them are. Everything we had to say to each other was said, long ago,<br> and if there's anything we missed out, well, it's unnecessary now." She

> hesitated and reached out to Squall's face. This time he didn't flinch. His<br> eyes widened as she laid her hand across his cheek and she gave a faint

> smile. He felt nothing. Not simply the lack of the feeling of skin on skin,<br> but the complete absence of anything. Even the usual pressure of the air,

> which everyone is so accustomed to they do not feel its pressure, had<br> vanished.

><br> "Let's go, Squall." She whispered. "You won't get what you want here."

> He gave up and started to walk towards the door with Raine, reassuring<br> himself that he'd come up with another idea soon, when she suddenly darted

> back towards the desk. Laguna still stood with his back turned and made<br> no movement as she began to speak.

><br> "I love you and I believe in you." She said softly. "And even though it's

> such a clichÃ© I'm cringing, I'm going to say it anyway. A part of me is<br> always with you, and always has been. I'm stubborn, remember? I don't give

> up anything that belongs to me easily. I'd better stop now, before the<br> platitudes I'll start pouring out disgust me." She sighed.

"Take care of

> yourself, Laguna." She gave the figure one last look before she turned and<br> walked out, and just before Squall pulled the door closed, he heard a reply.

><br> "'Bye, Raine."

><br> Turning to his mother, he saw a luminous pain in her eyes.

><br> "You said it hurt to speak to him. So why did you?" he questioned.

><br> "Because there are some things that should never go unsaid. Because

> perhaps he needed to hear that." She grinned at him. "I might be stubborn,<br> but that doesn't mean I can't change my mind sometimes."

><br> Squall thought about that and they walked in silence for a while.

><br> "You make a big thing out of being stubborn." He commented and she frowned.

><br> "Yes, I suppose I do. Perhaps it's because it is one of the few parts of

> me I'm really sure of. Everything else in my personality seems to drift<br> and change, but that is one of the things that stays with me."

><br> "What else stays with you?"

><br> "You should know!" She laughed. "Can't you guess?"

><br> A slight crease formed in Squall's forehead, his face deadly serious. /He/

> didn't think it was funny.<br>

> "Love for Elle and Laguna." He hazarded.<br>

> "And you!" She chided gently. "Why is it you find it so hard to believe<br> that I love you, too?"

><br> "It's not that..." He shrugged. "You know them so much better, so

> obviously you love them much more."<br>

> "Oh, obviously/." She retorted, rolling her eyes.

><br> "Please don't do that, you sound like Rinoa."

><br> "Squall, I don't like talking about loving somebody /more/ than somebody

> else. That's not the way my mind works. If I love somebody, then that's it.<br> There is no graduation for me. It's a simple yes or no situation. I love

> you all in different ways, but there is no "more than" or "less than". Do<br> you understand?"  
><br> "A little." He grudgingly admitted. He paused, and when he spoke again,  
> there was a trace of fear in his voice. "Do you hate me now?"<br>  
> "What? For dragging me up to see him? No. How could I hate you? You<br> /thought/ you were right."  
><br> "I'm not giving up." He warned. "I can't let you leave. Even after what  
> you've told me. It's not enough. I want you to stay here with me."<br>  
> She nodded solemnly. "I know that. But I will go in the end. You do<br> whatever you have to, but you will learn to see things differently before  
> this is done."<br>  
> They walked back into the small room on the lower level and found Rinoa<br> sat waiting for them.  
><br> /Uh oh. She's in a /really/ bad mood. I haven't seen that look on her face  
> since I told her she was an amateur, back in Timber.  
><br> Squall just had time to deposit the white flower on the table before Rinoa  
> stood and pulled him back through the door. <br>  
> "We need to talk." She said flatly, pulling him into another room at the<br> end of the corridor.  
><br> "What is it?" he asked, playing dumb. She glared at him and he dropped  
that idea.<br>  
> "You took her up to Laguna, didn't you?" she accused.<br>  
> "And?"<br>  
> "And/? What do you mean /And/?" She smacked her forehead with an open  
palm. "Are either of them ever going to speak to you again, or have you<br> managed to make them disown you yet?"  
><br> "What are you talking about? Raine's still speaking to me."  
  
><br> "What about Laguna?" she countered.  
><br> "I don't know. But he never argues with anyone for long."  
Squall answered  
> confidently.<br>  
> "Well he might decide to start making up for lost time!"<br>  
> "Why would he?"<br>  
> "Ohhh... I'm going to thump you so/ hard in a minute! I'm beginning to  
wonder if you actually have/ a heart in there, or if it's just a solid lump  
of stone."<br>  
> "Whatever... Rinoa, it didn't work anyway. They didn't seem to want to<br> talk. They just stood there. He wouldn't even turn and look at her!" Squall  
> sighed. "I don't understand it. If... if it was us in that situation... If<br> you were dead... I'd want to see you. I really would. And I couldn't let  
you go. How can they...?"<br>  
> "They are different to us." She said, still smiling at what he had said.<br> "You wouldn't let me go..." she mused to herself. "I wouldn't go anywhere.  
> I'd stay whether you liked it or not. How can I explain it to you, Squall?<br> They're both too afraid of hurting each other." Rinoa

paused and gave a

> short laugh. The sound echoed through Squall's head like silver bells and<br> he found he had missed that sound. They had been arguing for so long, he

> hadn't heard her laughter for days.<br>

> "We're not like that." She continued. "We're selfish, possessive. We'd<br> rather be in pain than be without each other, I guess. Loss is the greatest

> hurt for us. But the thing that hurts them the most is the pain of the<br> other. Neither of them can stand the other to be in pain. And you forced

> that on them." She drew in a breath. "OK, I'm done."<br>

> Squall nodded and mulled over what she had said. "That's the<br> psycho-analysis from Rinoa over then?"

><br> "Just think about it, will you? Try to understand what you've done. Maybe

> you didn't do any harm and you've gotten away with it, but at least try to<br> understand it. C'mon. Edea spoke to Dr. Odine and they've figured out

> something that might work."<br>

> "I can't let Raine go. Not without a fight, it's just not in me." Squall<br> said gently, not wanting to argue with Rinoa again. "I can't listen to your

> ideas, because I don't want them to work."<br>

> "You have to. You've hurt Raine enough already. She might need you and you<br> have to be around in case she does."

><br> He acquiesced and they walked silently back.

><br> \*\*\*\*\*

><br> "I've talked with Dr. Odine and we've finally agreed on something that

> should work." Edea stood and the others around the table waited anxiously<br> for her solution.

><br> "The flower is entirely made up of sorcery, no part of it already existed

> when it was made. Therefore, the answer is to use something to banish the<br> sorcery from the rose, rather than trying to destroy the thing itself.

><br> "At first we thought of one of Odine's products, to seal the power the

> rose contains, but then we found something a little better. The Sorceress<br> Memorial is still fully functional and Odine has given permission for us to

> use it to seal the flower." Edea paused. "We don't know for sure if it'll<br> work. If it doesn't then I have nothing else left I can suggest. We really

> will have tried everything."<br>

> The Sorceress Memorial? That sealed Adel up for years. I haven't got a

> chance of it failing with a simple flower! It's not fair!

><br> Rinoa nudged Squall. "Vanished into his own little world again." She

> commented to Raine, who watched her son for a moment.<br>

> "No. I don't think that's it. He has his own little conversation going on.<br> His own inner monologue, don't you Squall?" Raine laughed, recognizing the

> signs of it. "So you get that from me, too."<br>

> Squall broke out of his thoughts, disgruntled to find them talking about<br> him. /She talks to herself like I do? I never knew that. I wonder if she

> realises that Laguna does it too. Or at least, he did, when Elle

sent me<br> back. There are too many things I don't know about her./

><br> "So /that's/ what's behind those silences of yours!" Rinoa exclaimed. "It

> makes much more sense now!"<br>

> Squall shrugged. He thought she'd already known about it. "Let's go." He<br> said shortly.

><br> \*\*\*\*\*

><br> He followed the others up the stairs, trailing at the back of the group for

> once. Looking up, he saw a crescent moon, Esthar's symbol, over the door<br> and he remembered the last time he had entered the Sorceress Memorial.

><br> He had come here to rescue Rinoa, having been persuaded that it was the

> right thing to do. Until then, he had believed that it was Rinoa's choice<br> and he should respect her decision, but Quistis had made him see that after

> all they had been through together, Rinoa's powers didn't matter. The two<br> of them belonged together, even if they did argue from time to time.

><br> How was Raine's decision any different to Rinoa's? What was to stop him

> from preventing this from happening, just like last time?<br>

> Grit determination filled his face and he caught up with the others as<br> they entered the main chamber of the Memorial.

><br> Squall watched as a technician listened carefully to Edea, then took the

> white flower from her hands and walked around the corner to place it in the<br> peculiar glass globe.

><br> He looked around at the others but Rinoa, Edea and Ellone were watching

> the technician. Raine, however, was watching him with a curious expression<br> on her face. Almost as if she were waiting.

><br> "I can't just stand here." He whispered, half to his mother, half to

> himself. "I have to stop this. I'm sorry."<br>

> It seemed to him then that he caught a glint of understanding in her eyes<br> but she shook her head.

><br> "Let me go, Squall. You don't have to do this." She replied, just loud

> enough for him to hear.<br>

> "I do." He said simply. Walking forwards until he stood in front of the<br> control panel, Squall drew his gunblade. The technicians backed away

> slightly as the artificial light bounced off the blade.<br>

> "This isn't going to happen. I won't let this happen. Not now. Not like<br> this." Squall looked pointedly at the technicians. "Don't touch anything,

> don't push any buttons. I don't want to hurt anybody, but I will, if I<br> have to."

><br> The group didn't move. They didn't get paid enough to stand up to

> knife-wielding maniacs. The most senior of them sighed. He had been here<br> the last time the kid had shown up and he wished the boy would make up his

> mind what side he was on and save them all this hassle.<br>

> "Squall! I thought you were going to think about what we talked about?"<br> Rinoa stepped forwards.

><br> "Sorry." He shrugged, realising he'd just landed himself in the

middle of

> another argument.<br>

> "I can stop you." She said, trying to look her most threatening but only<br> making Squall suppress the urge to snigger.

><br> "I can use sorcery to stop you." She continued desperately, flexing her

> fingers. "Come away from there or I'll make/ you. I will! I really mean

> it!"<br>

> "Then use your sorcery, if that's what you want to do. Can you raise your<br> hand against me?" He was /almost/ sure he knew the answer to that, and he

> hoped he wasn't wrong. He had been on the wrong end of sorcery before and<br> didn't care to repeat the episode.

><br> The young sorceress lifted her hand, fingers stretched outwards, and

> light beginning to collect at her palm.<br>

> "I can't!" she wailed suddenly, scattering the light. "Not against... Ohhh!<br> I hate you! I hate you for making me do this!"

><br> Squall was taken aback. "You hate me?" His eyes widened in horror.

><br> "No!" Rinoa relented immediately "I don't /hate/ you. Well, not much. I

> just... Oh, you annoy me, that's all. You disappoint me. Please step away<br> and let the technicians do their job. Won't you do this for me? Please?"

> She implored, trying a different tack.<br>

> "No." Squall shook his head. "Why aren't you on my side? Why have you<br> been against me all along? You know I hate arguing with you."

><br> "Because you're wrong. You /must/ know that by now. Everyone has told you

> that and given you reasons and still you persist. Why are you so stubborn?"<br>

> "Ask her." Squall shot a glance at Raine, who had walked down to stand<br> with Rinoa. "I know you better than you think, Rinoa. The real reason you

> want Raine to go is because she's a reminder of your mistake. Every time<br> you see her you remember that its /your/ fault she's here and you don't like

> that."<br>

> "Oh, you swine!" Rinoa yelled. "You absolute, cold-hearted - " She<br> stopped suddenly and laughed, a smile crossing her face. Walking forwards,

> she started to speak in a sing-song voice. "You've missed something, Squall.<br> I might not be able to use sorcery against you, but you certainly won't use

> that on me." She gestured to the gunblade.<br>

> Squall shook his head. "No, maybe I can't. But I can use it on them." He<br> lifted the blade to point it at the technicians.

><br> "You wouldn't. I /know/ you wouldn't."

><br> "Perhaps, but do you want to risk it?"

><br> Rinoa stopped where she was and stamped her foot in exasperation. Turning,

> she looked to Edea and Ellone, who had been silently watching the<br> squabbling, to ask if there was anything they could do.

Before she could

> speak, the door opened and Laguna stepped through, flanked, as

always, by  
 Kiros and Ward.

><br> "Why does Laguna have this uncanny ability to lead us straight into the

> middle of dangerous situations?" Kiros muttered to Ward, seeing Squall with  
 the gunblade outstretched.

><br> "..."

><br> "Well, yeah, I /know/ we were in the army, but most of the time our little

> skirmishes were unauthorized, probably because we were in the wrong  
 place..." Kiros replied to Ward's unspoken comment.

><br> "Dangerous?" Laguna replied, overhearing the first comment.

"Nah. It's

> just Squall." <br>

> "Well that/ has to be up there in the top 10 most moronic things you've

> ever said." Kiros breathed quietly, knowing that Laguna had spotted Raine  
 and therefore wasn't interested in banter anymore.

><br> "Well?" Raine asked, placing her hands on her hips as he simply stared at

> her.<br>

> "You look the same. You look exactly as I remember. Funny, but I didn't  
 think you would, for some reason."

><br> "You have a bad memory. I'm quite sure I wasn't transparent before." She

> smiled.<br>

> "Well, yeah, there is that." Laguna's grin deteriorated. <br>

> "Why did you change your mind? Why are you here?"<br>

> "I... don't know."<br>

> "Ah, no. You've tried evading questions before and we found out then that  
 you couldn't do it, so give up. I'm the same person and if I decide I

> really want an answer, I'll get one." She laughed almost happily,  
 despite the pain inside.

><br> "I was just kinda sat around and I was thinking. Just about stuff, you

> know." He waited for the comment from Kiros about him actually being able  
 to think and miracles /can/ happen, or something to that effect. When there

> was only silence, he continued on with what he had been saying.

"And I<br> thought about how I couldn't possibly see you, because it hurt. But then

> I thought, well, it hurts if I just sit here and do nothing, so what's the  
 difference? I might as well come and see you because that's what I'd rather

> do. Besides, maybe being here wouldn't hurt as much as I thought it would.<br> Did that make sense?" He raised an eyebrow.

><br> "I think so. In the obscure but strangely logical way your explanations

> usually make sense." Raine paused, tilting her head on one side.

"Does it<br> hurt? As much as you thought?"

><br> "Absolutely kills." He confided with a grin. "I miss you."

><br> "No. Don't start on that. I can't... Just leave it. I know what you want

> to say so let's leave it at that." She warned.<br>

> Laguna nodded, and looked around. Holding up his hand, signalling for  
 Raine to wait a moment, he crossed the floor to Ellone.

><br> "Sorry about earlier, Elle. I didn't mean to yell at you."

><br> Ellone smiled. "You're here now. All is forgiven. It already was, anyway."

><br> Laguna turned back to Raine and shrugged. "Well, what do we do now? You

> want to leave?" <br>

> Raine dipped her head slightly in reply, not quite able to form the words.<br> "She can't." Squall interrupted. "I won't let her."

><br> "He's /still/ trying this?" Laguna asked, surprised. "What did we do wrong?"

> I thought he was supposed to be the smart one."<br>

> "We did everything wrong. But he is quite/ smart. He just doesn't know

> what to do." She stepped out of the way, motioning for Laguna to go and<br> talk to Squall.

><br> Squall was distinctly unimpressed. He hated being talked about like he

> wasn't there. <br>

> "What exactly do you plan to do now, Squall? There isn't really a lot<br> left you /can/ do. Oh, and put that away." Laguna pointed to the blade.

><br> "Why?" Squall demanded, glaring at his father.

><br> "Because technically, you being who you are and me being who I am, it's

> Garden declaring war on Esthar. As good as Garden is, I don't think it<br> could quite stand up to Esthar's technology."

><br> "Garden isn't involved. It's just me acting on my own. You /know/ that."

><br> "Yeah, but I might choose to ignore it. As for you acting on your own,

> egotistical just ain't the word if you think you can take out an army,<br> single-handedly." Laguna laughed. "You might be good, Squall, but..."

><br> "You wouldn't do that." Squall answered confidently. "Raine stays. It's

> alright for you. You made your peace with her. We helped you do that." He<br> stopped that line of conversation as Laguna shot him a warning look. Neither

> of them were dumb enough to mention that Laguna hadn't been with Raine when<br> she died, originally. It had been Squall's idea to send him back to be with

> her.<br>

> "You and Sis both had your chances and gained the absolution you needed.<br> You're both happy now. Why can't I have a chance? I never even knew her! I

> want her to stay. I need/ her to stay."

><br> Raine, slightly astonished at that last remark, stepped forwards.

><br> "You don't need me. You've /never/ needed me. Not even when you were small.

> You've always been so self-sufficient and not just because you've had to<br> be. It's a part of you that would always have been there. Perhaps I would

> stay if you were younger, or if you did not have Rinoa with you. I would<br> certainly stay if Laguna or Ellone asked me to, but they won't. They needed

> me but you never have. And you've done so very well on your own! Look at<br> all you've achieved without either of us! Let me go, Squall. Give me that

> one small thing. You don't really need me to be here, and as for

knowing<br> me, you do now. You've been talking to me and listening to my replies for a  
> while. If you don't know me now, you never will." Raine sighed heavily.<br>  
> "Just let me go. It doesn't cost you anything really. Learn to see that."<br>  
> Squall stood stunned at what she had said. He did/ need her, didn't he?  
> He lowered the gunblade in confusion and Rinoa stepped forwards and wrapped<br> her arms round his waist.  
><br> "Stop being selfish. She's right. You've fought and now there's nothing  
> else you can do."<br>  
> "You told me once that I should let go, because nothing I could do would<br> make it real. You should follow your own advice, Squall. This isn't real,  
> either. Forcing Raine to stay isn't going to make it any more real." Laguna<br> put in, pointedly avoiding any reference to just when and why Squall had  
> given him that advice.<br>  
> Squall stood still for a moment, his brown hair flopping down into his<br> eyes. /Am I selfish?/ He thought. /Can I let her go, after all my efforts to  
> make her stay? Was she right, she told me I'd have to let her go, in the<br> end. They're right. I've always known that they were right. I just hoped.../  
><br> He sheathed the blade and turned away in defeat. "I had to try. I couldn't  
> just accept..."<br>  
> "I would have thought less of you if you had." Raine said gently and he<br> turned back to stare at her, realising that he had known that already. He  
> knew her better than he thought. She smiled at him, catching his eye.<br>  
> "Finally," Raine breathed in relief "I can go." <br>  
> "It might not work." Edea cautioned. "Remember what I said."<br>  
  
> "What's it like? Death?" Laguna asked and Squall groaned. Everyone has  
> been carefully side-stepping that question. Trust Laguna to put his foot in<br> it./  
><br> To Squall's surprise, his mother didn't seem to mind.  
><br> "You know everyone says it's like going to sleep? Well it is, only more  
> than you imagine. When you go to sleep, you don't know that you've gone to<br> sleep until you wake up. You don't even know that you /are/ asleep. It's  
> like that. I only know because I'm here. If I was still... well, I would<br> still be blissfully unaware."  
><br> "That sounds... horrible." Laguna shuddered slightly.  
><br> "Yeah, but it isn't. Because you don't know, see?" Raine took a small  
> step forwards and lifted her arms up around his neck.<br>  
> Squall watched Laguna's eyes widen, just as his had done when Raine had<br> touched his cheek. He remembered that strange absence of physical feeling  
> all too well. Laguna simply stood there, not wanting to move because he<br> might go right through her.  
><br> "OK, tell them." Raine whispered.  
><br> Squall turned to Rinoa and folded his arms around her, not

wanting to  
> watch.<br>> Laguna nodded to the technicians who had stood, completely bewildered, in<br> the corner of the room. Two of them walked hesitantly to the control panel  
> and started to tap the buttons. All eyes fixed on the flower where it<br> rested in the glass globe, mist beginning to consume it.

><br> \*\*\*\*\*  
><br> A ten-year old girl ran through the flowers for the simple pleasure of  
> running. Her brown hair flew out behind her, the wind sweeping it out of<br> her face, as her legs carried her faster through the field, crushing the  
> flowers underfoot.<br>> Finally out of breath, she stopped and flopped down into the blooms, the<br> stems lifting the flowers high over her head as she sank back. Her blue  
> eyes stared through the petals at the sky for a moment as her breathing<br> returned to normal.  
><br> She tilted her head to one side and, seeing a flower she had stepped on,  
> she frowned. Cupping it carefully between her hands, she inspected it,<br> finding it was bruised and damaged beyond repair. She smashed it quickly  
> into nothing, unable to see it in such a state. Nothing should linger like<br> that, she decided and then she laughed. Well, that wouldn't happen to her.  
> Not ever. <br>> She stretched her arms up to the sun, reaching out to feel the warmth on<br> her bare arms, her childlike mind unable to conceive of a time when she  
> didn't exist, or a time when she wouldn't exist. Her time would last for<br> eternity, as far she was concerned. Death and illness were yet to touch her  
> young life and she smiled at the thought of them. What were they to her? <br>> "Forever!" Raine laughed out loud, whimsically. "They'll not take me! I'm<br> forever!"  
><br>> THE END.<br>> <br> Author's note: Apologies for the end, but some people I know didn't want  
> Raine to leave at the end, and some people did, so I've left it very much<br> open to your own interpretation. I'd be interested to hear what you think  
> happened, and if you e-mail me, I'll tell you what I think happened. Here's<br> what has become the now obligatory poem:  
><br> Leaving The Rest Unsaid.  
> By Robert Graves.<br>> Finis, apparent on an earlier page, with fallen obelisk for colophon,<br> Must this be here repeated?  
><br> Death has been ruefully announced  
> And to die once is death enough, be sure, for any life-time.<br>  
> Must the book end, as you would end it,<br> With testamentary appendices and graveyard indices?  
><br> But no, I will not lay me down  
> To let your tearful music mar the decent mystery of my progress.<br>

> So now, my solemn ones, leaving the rest unsaid,<br> Rising in air  
as on a gander's wing  
> At a careless comma,<br>

End  
file.